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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, IRAN

¶11. Summary: As the 2008 presidential elections and the alleged scandal involving the privatization of the Taiwan Television Enterprise continued to receive considerable coverage in the Taiwan media on March 28, news coverage also focused on Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-pyng's planned trip to Beijing in April and other local issues. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page two that read "Wang Jin-pyng to Set Foot in Mainland [China] in April and Meet with Hu Jintao."

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" news analysis discussed the "U.S. factor" behind Wang's planned visit to Beijing in April. The article said Washington is very concerned about whether the cross-Straits relations will be calm and tranquil during the remainder of President Chen Shui-bian's term. With regard to Iran, a "China Times" column asked why Washington does not offer a security commitment to Iran, as it did for North Korea. An op-ed piece in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed the new Iranian crisis and said Washington is most worried that bin Laden will spoil its plan and force the United States to pull more of its soldiers into the quagmire of Afghanistan. End summary.

¶13. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"'U.S. Factor' is an Important Hand Pushing for [Wang Jin-pyng's] Ice-Breaking Trip"

Journalists Ho Po-wen and Hsiao Hsu-tsen noted in an analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/28):

".... The reason why Wang Jin-pyng is able to break the ice [across the Taiwan Strait] in April is, without a doubt, because Chen Shui-bian, eyeing the campaign situation for 2008, intended to boost Wang's influence so that Wang can run neck and neck with Ma Ying-jeou. But the United States' taking a stand [for Wang] is in reality a more critical factor. In March 2006, AIT Taipei Director publicly called upon Wang, hoping that he 'could serve as the pushing hand that breaks the ice across the Taiwan Strait and foster both sides to resume dialogue as early as possible.'

"Classified sources revealed that Wang has recently informed the United States in person via formal diplomatic channels of his intention to visit mainland China in April. High-ranking U.S. officials, in addition to showing appreciation to Wang for his respect of Washington by not 'surprising' the United States, expressed a welcome attitude to Wang's trip to the mainland. U.S. officials even relayed a message from the White House to Wang which said that the U.S. government was really upset with Chen's making the 'Four Wants and One Without' announcement without notifying Washington in advance. With regard to the way Chen 'played his card' during the last year of his term, a U.S. official pointed out directly that 'this is a matter of personal traits!' Yet what Washington really cares is that Chen, despite the fact that he is already a 'lame duck' in the legislative body, still insisted on

'showing his card.' Washington is very concerned about whether cross-Strait relations will be calm and tranquil in this year."

14. Iran

A) "Why Doesn't the United States Offer a Security Commitment to Iran?"

The "International Outlook" column in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/28):

"... During the fourth round of the 'Six-Party Talks' in 2005, the United States even requested that Pyongyang not be allowed to possess any civilian nuclear facilities because such facilities can be transformed for military use and develop nuclear weapons at any time. Pyongyang disregarded Washington's request then and has now developed nuclear weapons. The United States, fearing that Iran will someday turn its civilian nuclear facilities to developing weapons, has been doing its best to stop Iran's engineering of transforming uranium [i.e. uranium enrichment]. But to refine and extract concentrated uranium is what Iran needs to do to protect its future security, so it will never abandon such a plan and will surely follow the lead of North Korea. The [security] commitment Washington offered to North Korea already came too late. If so, why not make an early [security] commitment to Iran, so that the country

will not follow in Pyongyang's footsteps? Why has the Western world never thought of it from this perspective?"

B) "Oil, Oil, It's All Because of Iran"

Kao Hsiung-poh, a Taipei-based strategic commentator, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (3/28):

"... The consequences of U.S. war in Iraq are a mixture of success of failure. The success lies in the fact that Washington has, after

all, controlled Iraq's oil; other countries cannot possibly buy oil from Iraq without the United States' approval. The United States would probably like to control Iran's oil in the same manner, particularly the oil resources near the borders of Iraq and Iran. But Washington failed to foresee that the lasting chaos in Iraq has caused the hike in international oil prices, which has benefited Russia in way that allows it to recover some of its national strength. This is the failure of the U.S. war in Iraq.

"If the consequences of Washington using force against Iran are even higher oil prices for a long period and zero chance for the United States to build several 'durable' huge military bases in Iran to safeguard its inland [oil] route to Central Asia against any lateral threats from Russia, Russia will then enjoy more a favorable strategic situation than the United States. ... The new 'Iranian crisis' has resulted in a surge in international oil prices, and the Saudi Arabian card did not seem to work this time. The United States' options to address this crisis are: to continue searching for possible ways to lower oil prices for a lasting period in the future; to try to use a blitzkrieg strategy quickly to control Iran's oil and to build huge military bases in Iran with no intent to completely occupy and rule the country. What Washington is most worried about now is that bin Laden will spoil its plan and force the United States to put more attention and pull more of its soldiers into the quagmire of Afghanistan, and in the meantime, Iran will gain time rapidly to strengthen its defensive capabilities."

WANG